

Frank B. Ford
Department of English
West Chester State College
West Chester, PA 19380

THE WIFE -- a play by Frank B. Ford

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He: My job's a technology, like Mobil or Arco. They support public television; I support my habit.

She: Coldly.

He: Coolly. As they do.

She: I said art. You're married to your art.

(He sits down, pours coffee, stares into cup)

He: Figure of speech. In this, uh, tentative time I must only float facts around, poke them...all perspectives. I'm sorry.

She: Whatever. Tuesday at eleven you think?

He: I know. I must know.

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He: Almonds on a silver dish.

She: Done. Even to the seven almonds on a silver dish.

He: (touching her hand) I'm sorry.

She: Don't be. The commonplace marriage can't be made tragic. I'm in the middle, my elbows drawn in, my breath held. Waiting. Life won't happen when it can't. It rushes; I compact.

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He: Over caves of pure ice.

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He: Makes me feel good--as if some part of me watches out for me.

She: You're the best. Feel good or bad. You're still the best. And I'm always looking out for you.

He: The best. Supply and demand.

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(taking article from top of clothes pile)

She: /We'll see. Now don't get upset. (standing to display it)
Let's look at this nice tennis outfit here. Jazzy!

He: Just right. Thank you.

She: Washed twice.

He: It looks very nice. Just right.

She: Thank you. Will you wear it now? (He takes it.)

He: No. I'll—(placing it loosely in bag) I'm going to Philadelphia first, buy some prints. (She sits.)

She: You're feeling confident.

He: Yes. Just right. Putting a little shock absorber in front.

She: Carefulllllll. Revealing too much.

He: You're probably correct.

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He: But not in summer.

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She: By all means. (rummages in bag) Oh!

He: They call the tune.

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He: Don't worry.

She: (slowly rising from chair) He runs. Heavily. You hear panting, full...slapping footfalls. As he becomes larger there's a a a a sort of phosphorescent rim around him, color of chalk but darkening. Trees behind him are going black and he wears a powder blue jogging suit with white piping taking on the color of that pale, glowing rim around him.

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He: For one instant I live on an exploding star!

She: (sits, suddenly calm) I see dark blood hanging as if painted on a pane of glass, his blurry collapse behind it. Mixed-in tints of black and purple from the trees and sky.

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